

ON PAGE

10 April 1987

Iran-contra panels probing back to 1981

By Michael Kelly
Sun Staff Correspondent

WASHINGTON — The two congressional committees probing the Iran-contra affair are casting a wide and deep net, examining the history of U.S. involvement with the Nicaraguan rebels even in the early days of the Reagan administration.

Documents obtained by *The Sun* make clear that the investigation is reaching back as far as January 1981 in an encompassing fashion — seeking information on nearly 100 individuals and companies involved in supporting the contras.

Such a broad investigation may cause divisive political overtones between Republicans and Democrats on the committees when public hearings begin May 5.

The Republicans, who are in the minority on both committees, have said that they wanted the investigations to be limited as much as possible to the immediate circumstances of the Iran-contra matter and not to be used by the controlling Democrats to examine the entire range of Reagan policy and practices in Central America. The investigations were prompted by the disclosure last year that profits from secret U.S. arms sales to Iran had been diverted to help arm the rebels, or contras, in defiance of a congressional ban.

But sources and appendices to subpoenas issued by the House and Senate Iran-contra committees indicate that the congressional investigators are in fact taking the broad approach.

Sources familiar with the investigations confirmed yesterday that the committees intend to delve deeply into private and administration dealings with the contras. The sources said the joint public hearings that begin next month will explore government and private military-supply efforts to the contras before and after the October 1984 version of the so-called Boland Amendment, which imposed a congressional ban on U.S. military aid to the rebels.

The sources said the committees would look at the history of Reagan administration involvement with the contras to determine if a private network to finance and arm the contras was established before the Boland Amendment and if administration officials helped establish and manage that network.

One congressional source said the committees would "look into assigning responsibility: how it came about that we had a public policy espoused by public officials [against military aid to the contras] and at the same time another secret policy carried out by private agents."

The source said that "the government role in all this will be the big focus" and that the hearings "are going to look at support of the contras before Boland and how that changed after Boland with the establishment of a private support network and what role the U.S. government played in that private network."

With those goals in mind, the sources said, the House committee has subpoenaed 170 people and the Senate committee more than 130.

Both committees have already received thousands of documents.

A recent report by a presidential review board into the Iran-contra affair found heavy involvement by then-National Security Council aide Lt. Col. Oliver L. North and his successive bosses, former national security advisers Robert C. McFarlane and Vice Adm. John M. Poindexter, in both the secret effort to fund and arm the contras during the congressional ban and the secret 1985-86 Iranian arms deals. The report did not determine whether administration officials had violated the Boland Amendment, which was in effect in various forms until October 1986, by allegedly helping a private network arm and finance the rebels.

The charter establishing the congressional committees gave them the power to conduct a broad investigation into U.S. dealings with the contras. The congressional sources and the subpoena appendices — copies of which were obtained by *The Sun* — indicate that the committees plan to make full use of their authority.

An appendix attached to the House subpoena, in particular, calls for the subpoenaed parties to provide a sweeping array of information. In its first paragraph, the document demands that the witness produce "All materials relating to any activity concerning the shipment of arms, munitions, missiles, electronics, or any other material that may be used for a military or lethal purpose whose ultimate destination was Central America from the time period January 1, 1981 through December 31, 1986."

The second paragraph elaborates on that demand, soliciting "all materials . . . regarding the furnishing of materials . . . to anti-government forces in Nicaragua, including flights to Honduras, Guatemala, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Panama, and Belize."

The documents include all records of bank accounts in Switzerland, the Cayman Islands, Bermuda and Portugal and all material relating to a list of 43 corporate or

government entities and 40 individuals.

The Senate committee's demands are only slightly less sweeping, asking for any information on 29 individuals and 59 corporate entities. The Senate subpoenas also demand any information the recipient has on "any person employed by, acting as an agent of, or representing" the CIA, the National Security Council, the Air Force, the Department of Defense, the Military Airlift Command and the Federal Aviation Administration, among others.

Both subpoenas include catch-all demands that broaden the scope of the probe still further.

The House appendix asks for all materials from Jan. 1, 1981 through Dec. 31, 1986 relating to a long list of individuals, some of them government officials. The list specifically names Colonel North, Mr. McFarlane and Admiral Poindexter but also demanded is information on any NSC or CIA employees not specifically named.

In a similar demand, the Senate subpoena asks for any information on those three administration officials but also asks for information on any person employed or representing "any agency, division or department of the United States with responsibility for manufacturing, storing, shipping, selling, transferring, monitoring or accounting for any armaments or military personnel whatsoever."

Although the House and Senate subpoena documents in some instances differ in the names of companies and people about whom investigators are seeking information, the evidence that results is being shared by the two panels as they prepare for the joint public hearings.

The two investigations have effectively been merged, with staffers from each scheduled to be present during the questioning of key witnesses, compatible computer storage and analysis systems and close coordination on such decisions as which witnesses should be granted immunity.

Continued

Many of those named in the subpoenas have already surfaced in an earlier Senate investigation into the secret U.S. arms deals with Iran or in the report by the special review board headed by former Sen. John Tower, R-Texas, or in published reports. The scope of the investigation is suggested, however, by requests for information on a number of people and entities not previously named.

The inquiry's breadth has generated some concern by Republicans.

Representative Dick Cheney of Wyoming, the ranking Republican on the House committee, said yesterday, "I've said all along that opponents of the Reagan Doctrine will try to use these hearings, if they can, to question the Reagan Doctrine in Central America, but I firmly believe aid to the contras ought to be determined on its own merits and it would be totally inappropriate to let the Iranian operation jeopardize that aid."

Representative Henry J. Hyde, R-Ill., a member of the House committee, said of the subpoena requests, "If that's what they are asking for, it's clear they are going to study [the administration's Central American] policy . . . not with a view to supporting it." He said, "If the inquiry is going to involve the policy rather than confining itself to any alleged violation of the law, it could alienate [Republicans] in the hearings and we might have difficulty focusing on the main concerns."

Committee member Michael De Wine, R-Ohio, said that he would have preferred an investigation with a narrower scope but that he could not say the Democratic majority was pursuing a "political agenda." Both he and Representative Hyde said they had no reason to criticize the way the Democratic leadership had conducted the investigation so far.

Washington Bureau correspondent Mark Matthews contributed to this article.